Understanding the Conditions and Consequences of Women's Political Representation

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To Maya, Victoriya and Diana

Abstract

In recent decades, women's ability to engage in politics and civil society has risen dramatically across the globe. What has the increase in the number of women in politics, their "descriptive representation", meant in substantive terms for women-citizens but also for societies in general? This dissertation contributes to clarifying the effects of descriptive representation of women on substantive representation, defined as the policy areas women tend to prioritize to a higher degree than men. The papers in the dissertation compare the effects of female representation on a comprehensive set of results: from policy inputs such as spending priorities to policy outcomes like infant mortality rates. Further, the dissertation theoretically clarifies and empirically tests the societal and institutional conditions that make it more or less likely for this descriptive-substantive link to work in practice. Across five papers utilizing comparative and historical datasets, I show that institutional efforts to increase representation (e.g., gender quotas) lead to gains in substantive representation. My findings also indicate that women representatives are successful in advancing the priorities of women as a group in both autocracies and democracies. This positive effect is partially explained by the activism of women-led civil society organizations. However, widespread corruption can undermine these efforts, and even lead to diminished development outcomes. In sum, my dissertation demonstrates that women's political representation can advance women's priorities, but this is unlikely to happen absent certain societal and institutional conditions.

Sammanfattning på svenska

Under de senaste decennierna har kvinnors förmåga att engagera sig i politiken och det civila samhället ökat dramatiskt över hela världen. Vad har ökningen av antalet kvinnor i politiken, den så kallade ”deskriptiva representationen”, inneburit för kvinnliga medborgare och för samhällen i allmänhet? Denna avhandling bidrar till att klargöra effekterna av deskriptiv representation av kvinnor på substantiell representation, definierat som de politikområden kvinnor tenderar att prioritera högre än män. Artiklarna i avhandlingen jämför effekterna av kvinnlig representation på en mängd olika utfall: från politiska insatser som sjukvårdsutgifter till politiska utfall som spädbarnsdödlighet. Vidare klargör och prövar avhandlingen teoretiskt och empiriskt de samhälleliga och institutionella förhållanden som gör det mer eller mindre sannolikt att länken mellan deskriptiv och substantiell representation fungerar i praktiken. I de fem fristående artiklarna i avhandlingen analyserar jag jämförande och historisk data, och resultaten visar att institutionella ansträngningar som syftar till att öka representationen (t.ex. könskvotering) leder till en förbättring i substantielll representation. Mina resultat tyder också på att kvinnliga representanter är framgångsrika i att främja kvinnors prioriteringar som grupp i både autokratier och demokratier. Denna positiva effekt förklaras delvis av aktivismen hos kvinnoledda civilsamhällesorganisationer. Utbredd korruption kan dock undergräva dessa ansträngningar och till och med leda till en försämring i utvecklingen. Sammanfattningsvis visar min avhandling att kvinnors politiska representation kan främja kvinnors prioriteringar, men att det är osannolikt att detta kommer att ske utan vissa samhälleliga och institutionella förutsättningar.

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My dissertation talks about the importance of symbolic representation of

women; in other words, seeing successful women in politics should encourage other women to believe more in themselves, and get them to engage in politics more. I know this theory worked at least for me, and my engagement with the profession of a researcher. Seeing several young women pursuing successful research careers, and personally encouraging me to do the same, has been a deciding factor for changing my mind on doing a PhD. Kristen Kao, Brigitte Seim, Anna Lührmann, Rachel Sigman, big thanks to each of you for being those role-models for me. I have learned so much from each and every one of you. Thank you for pushing me to join the cool club of women researchers also to Carolien Van Ham, Marcia Grimes, Marina Nistotskaya and Amy Alexander, and for being great examples of great colleagues and teachers.

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Contents

"I'm absolutely confident that for two years if every nation on earth was run by women, you would see a significant improvement across the board on just about everything. There would be less war, kids would be better taken care of, and there would be a general improvement in living standards and outcomes."

Barack Obama
December 16, 2019; Singapore, Private event on leadership.[1]

1 Introduction

1.1 The research problem

Historically, norms and legal restrictions have significantly limited the extent to which women have engaged in governance and politics. Worldwide, restrictions have been broad in scope and encompassed issues such as limited civil liberties (employment, property rights, access to justice) and political rights (voting and representation), as well as informal institutions that put down women (expectations that women should be at home). The combination of these has resulted in significant imbalance of women's representation

[1] BBC: "Barack Obama: Women are better leaders than men." Accessed 27 September 2021 https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-50805822

in governance. Furthermore, women live in poverty and face hunger at higher rates than men; they are less likely to have access to education and health-care, safe work and water (UN Women 2018).[2] They are more likely to experience violence in their lifetime, and face high specific risks during pregnancy and childbirth (ibid). Political scientists along with practitioners and activists have long argued that, at least partially, these development problems could be addressed by increasing the representation of women (e.g. Sapiro 1981; Phillips 1995; Mansbridge 1999; Clayton and Zetterberg 2018 and the Beijing Platform of Action (1995).

In recent decades, resulting from broader global changes in norms related to gender equality, there has been a substantial shift in the extent to which women have been able to engage in political and civil society life. By 2019, the average number of women parliamentarians was 24,5 per cent, double than in 1998, and a significant improvement from the average of 5 percent in 1970 (Inter-Parliamentary Union 2019). At the executive level change is happening at somewhat slower but steady pace (Jalalzai 2008). Women comprised 20,7 per cent of members of cabinet, and there were 23 women presidents or prime ministers in 2019 (out of close to 200 countries) (IPU and UN women 2019).[3]

What has that dramatic change in representation of women in politics meant for important political outcomes such as economic and human development, especially when considering the situation of women citizens? Although parity in representation between men and women is far from achieved, the advancements made give researchers the opportunity to study how women's political presence - termed descriptive representation, has changed politics. Across five papers and utilizing comparative and historical datasets, this dissertation contributes precisely to clarifying the effects of descriptive representation of women, focusing on substantive representation,

[2]Note that these inequalities are starker in poorer contexts but are observed also in OECD countries; for example, food insecurity for women is around 2 per cent higher than for men in Austria, Belgium and Denmark (ibid).

[3]Only six women served as heads of state in the 1970s, and 26 in the 1990s; whereas the share of women in cabinet was 9% in 1999 (Bauer and Tremblay 2011).

defined as the policy areas women tend to prioritize to a higher degree than men. The papers in the dissertation compare the effects on a comprehensive set of results: from policy outputs (e.g., spending priorities) to policy outcomes (e.g., infant mortality rates). Further, the dissertation theoretically clarifies and empirically tests the societal and institutional conditions that make it more or less likely for this descriptive-substantive link to work in practice. Thus, the general research questions that guide my work can be summarized as follows:

- Does descriptive representation of women in politics have positive impact on their substantive representation?
- What institutional and societal factors condition this relationship?

As a starting point, the dissertation holds that fair political representation for everyone has strong normative power in the sense that all citizens should have an equal say in political decision-making, but it also argues that political empowerment should make a difference in the everyday life of people, especially for the groups being represented. More specifically, I build on the argumentation by Phillips (1995) that it is not enough for women to be given the right to choose their representatives but it also matters who those representatives *are*. Given that women have shared experiences, problems and ideas how to address those problems (Sapiro 1981), making a concentrated effort to ensure women's representation in the ranks of politics is justified. In particular, inclusion of women in politics becomes important at the backdrop of the fact that previous institutional barriers systematically excluded women as a group, creating systemic obstacles for the representation of their interests (Htun and Weldon 2010). Thus, women's shared social experiences, or their gender, and not their sex, defined by biological differences, creates a set of common interests, which have political implications that ought to be represented in politics (Celis and Childs 2008). Importantly, even if descriptive representation is not a promise for substantive representation, the presence of women in politics gives women the opportunity, and thus greater likelihood, to lift their policy priorities (Phillips 1995).

What is the evidence from the literature so far in terms of descriptive representation delivering concrete policy outcomes? Mansbridge (2005) famously writes that "descriptive representation by gender improves substan-

tive outcomes for women in every polity for which we have a measure" (p. 622). Indeed, there is rich empirical support for this relationship from various contexts, even if there is no consensus on the operationalizations of substantive representation (Htun et al. 2013), as the effects of women's representation can be operationalized in multiple ways (Wängnerud 2009). Broadly, the research on substantive representation can be categorised in three strands by the dependent variable in focus: 1) policy preferences; 2) policy outputs; and 3) policy outcomes.

The first and quite well-developed strand of research documents that there is a differences in the policy preferences of men and women. This strand of the literature shows convincingly that women tend to prioritize government investment in issues such as poverty alleviation, health-care and access to water, while men focus on infrastructure and economy (Gottlieb et al. 2016; Khan 2017). Women also favor wealth redistribution and social welfare programs more than men, even after accounting for the individuals' political ideology (Alesina and Giuliano 2011; Poggione 2004). A second strand of studies help us to understand the effect of female representation on policy outputs such as the composition of budgets, adoption of laws, motions made in parliament; the evidence, on average, points to women being successful in *acting* on behalf of women (Clayton and Zetterberg 2018; Ennser-Jedenastik 2017; Franceschet et al. 2012). A third much less developed strand of the literature focuses on policy outcomes (Wängnerud 2009; Reingold 2008). Some prominent examples show that increased representation of women in politics helps to improve outcomes that disproportionately affect women's welfare such as provision of childhood health services in India (Bhalotra and Clots-Figueras 2014), improved child-care coverage in Norway (Bratton and Ray 2002), and access to services in Tunisia (Benstead 2019). In a cross-country study of 102 developing countries, Swiss et al. (2012) find that descriptive representation in the legislature is associated with increased infant and child survival.

However, these findings are not universal. Studies from Latin America suggest that the inclusion of previously marginalized groups, such as women, in political power has not resulted in their meaningful representation when measured with the amounts of adopted bills protecting those minorities (Htun et al. 2013; Franceschet and Piscopo 2008; Htun 2016). In a study of representation in U.S. states, Cowell-Meyers and Langbein

(2009) find that increased presence of women improved only 5 out of the 34 women-friendly policies. Even further, Nistotskaya and Stensöta (2018) using the example of Russia, warn that in certain contexts higher representation of women might have opposite effects to the one expected, as women parliamentarians might work directly against the interests of women as a group. It is also quite natural to accept that both men and women can act in a way that support women's rights (Reingold 2008; Wängnerud 2015), which further questions the notions whether the presence of women in politics is necessary to see the representation of their interests. Summing up the findings from the descriptive-substantive link in the U.S., Reingold (2008) concludes that women's presence is "neither absolutely necessary nor entirely sufficient" to see women's priorities implemented.

Thus, given that the descriptive-substantive representation link is not automatic, I argue that what the literature has not understood to a sufficient extent are the *conditions* that make it more or less likely for that link to work in practice. The dissertation shows evidence that while institutional efforts to increase *descriptive* representation are helpful for *substantive* representation as well, widespread corruption might undermine these efforts, and even lead to opposite effects for development to the ones intended. Furthermore, my findings indicate that women representatives are successful in advancing the priorities of women as a group both in autocracies and democracies, and this could partially be explained with the successful activism of women civil society organizations. In sum, the main contributions of the thesis lies in exploring the conditions under which representation leads to changes in policy outcomes. I summarize next my main arguments and findings, and how they fit the existing literature.

1.2 Summary of the contribution

The dissertation moves into an ongoing conversation about the effects of descriptive representation. Building on previous research, I develop a more comprehensive model on the societal and institutional conditions that frame the descriptive-substantive representation link. Hannah Pitkin (1967) presents one of the first and most influential theoretical models which offers an integrated notion about the different dimensions of representation. She delineates four views: *descriptive representation*, which captures the similarity in terms of background characteristics between representatives and represen-

tees; *formal representation* refers to the institutional rules and procedures used to select representatives; *symbolic representation* reflects the subjective perceptions of those being represented about the quality of their representation; and *substantive representation* relates to the actual policy responsiveness taken on behalf of representatives. Most empirical work on representation, however, has focused on unpacking one or two of those dimensions in isolation with the integrated model by Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler (2005) being a notable exception with their analysis of 31 democracies from 1995 to 1997.

Figure 1 presents a graphical illustration of the main steps of the argument used in this dissertation that women's presence in politics (Descriptive Representation) will result in observable changes to politics (Substantive Representation); two of the dimensions presented by Pitkin. To connect descriptive to substantive representation, I argue that for societies the ability of women to freely express and advocate for themselves means enriching the number and variability of ideas produced and, eventually, implemented in governance (see link A in the model). This added value of women's participation is important not only due to the simple mathematical calculation that half of society's talent is otherwise lost, but, I argue and empirically test the proposition, that the inclusion of women will create a qualitatively different output of governance (link B).

To test the observable implications of this argument, first I focus on the proposition that women will bring about a greater variation and selection of better ideas. In the dissertation a greater variety of ideas is proxied with technological change[4], and is connected to subsequent impact on economic development. Second, I study the advancements in health-care as this is a policy area, more likely to be higher on the priority list of women compared to men. I contribute to clarifying several steps in the chain of representation

[4]Technological change is defined as any change in the organization and production processes that modifies the link from production inputs to outputs, meaning that technological progress occurs when more output can be produced for the same amount of labor, capital and human capital inputs.

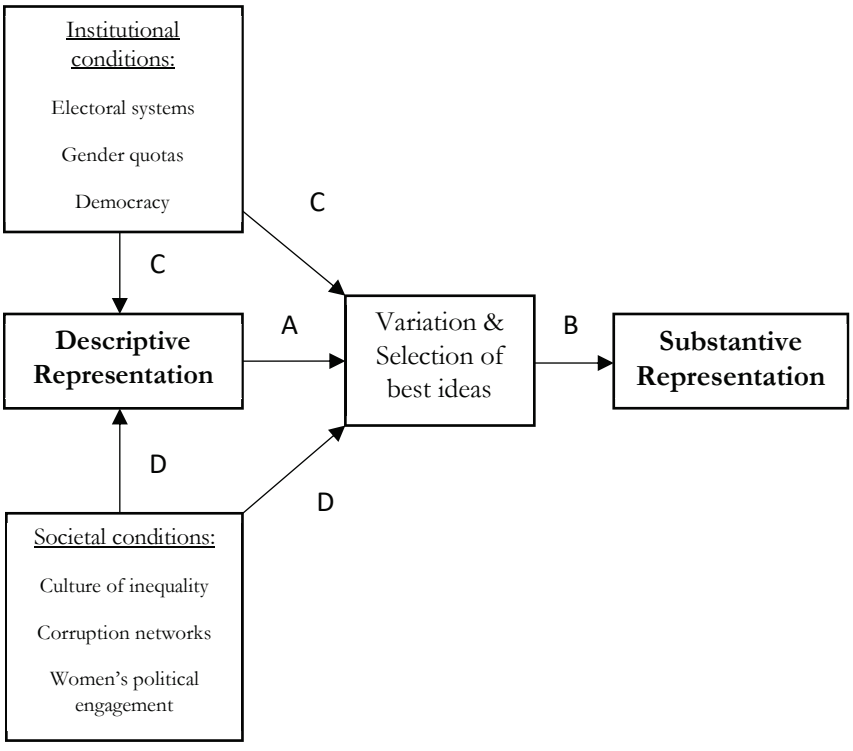

Figure 1: Sketch of the main components and links in the argument.

across the papers: First, I study policy inputs, where I choose to focus on the extent to which compared to men, women candidates for political office put focus on health-care during electoral campaigns. Second, I study policy outputs in the form of budget allocations for health-care. Finally, I study policy outcomes measured with infant and child mortality rates. This broad operationalization of the dependent variable provides a more comprehensive picture about the effects on substantive representation at different stages

of policy implementation. As a comparison, Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler (2005) focus on gender equality policies and laws as operationalization of substantive representation.

Further, the dissertation argues that informal and formal institutions influence the extent to which this link from representation to policies is realized in practice. I have organized the examined conditions into two sets: *institutional* and *societal* factors (links C and D in the model respectively). Those conditions include some of the factors presented by Pitkin (1967) (and tested by Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler (2005) namely electoral systems (called formal representation in Pitkin's model), but also add other important considerations that are bound to influence the quality of representation. These are gender quotas and democracy within the institutional conditions, and a set of societal conditions: culture of inequality, corruption and women's political engagement.[5]

Next I summarize the arguments why this set of political conditions should determine the success of policies. The dissertation contends, and finds support in the argument that institutions which make descriptive representation easier - namely, proportional representation and gender quotas on average also help substantive representation, as they provide the opportunity for women to enter politics and make policy changes (Williams 2000; Höhmann 2019; Franceschet and Piscopo 2008; Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004; Clayton et al. 2017). This finding should be compared with other literatures suggesting that quotas and proportional systems might produce "second-class" politicians or marginalize women (for review see Zetterberg (2008); Barnes (2016). One such argument is that introducing gender quotas might increase the control of party leadership over representatives as it allows hand-picking candidates that will be loyal to the party leaders who

[5]The latter condition - women's political engagement relates to Pitkin's argument about the importance of symbolic representation, where women citizens might be more active in politics after seeing other women in position of power. Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler (2005) operationalize this dimension with trust in the legislature; thus, I am able to test more directly the interaction between women parliamentarians and civil society activism.

selected them, at the expense of reforms such as democratic primaries that might strengthen the accountability link between representatives and voters on local level (Baldez 2006).

Further, within the institutional characteristics, I expect that democracy should strengthen the link descriptive-substantive representation, by enhancing the accountability link between politicians and their constituents, and thus the likelihood that representatives will act in the interests of those being represented (Khan 2017; Gerring et al. 2012; Wang et al. 2018). However, contrary to that expectation, I find systematic evidence that women politicians in autocratic and democratic regimes are able to advance women's priorities. I explore two explanations for this finding: First, some women's interests might not be perceived as threatening by autocrats, and they might allow progress in certain dimensions as a way to appeal to domestic audiences (Forman-Rabinovici and Sommer 2019). Second, I argue that women could be successful, both in autocracies and democracies, in advancing their priorities through mechanisms outside of formal institutions of the state.

Looking at the societal conditions, the dissertation theorizes that the mobilization of female citizens can affect the descriptive-substantive link. Civil society mobilization should help to enhance the effectiveness of formal institutions in two ways: 1) by helping to crystallize and inform what constitutes the women group interest, and 2) by increasing the threat of sanctioning in cases when the expectations of representation are not met (Goetz et al. 2008; Mechkova et al. 2018; Weldon 2002). The empirical evidence tested across two papers finds robust support for that argument.

Furthermore, the dissertation considers how norms influence formal institutions. The traditional understanding that 'women belong at home', while the public sphere is reserved for men has resulted in systematic discrimination against women in politics (Htun and Weldon 2010). Women face stereotypes that they are not fit for office as they ought to be kind and warm (or else they will be perceived as not being 'nice' enough), versus agentic and aggressive, qualities that people tend to associate both with masculinity and good leaders, at the same time as they should stick to policy issues within the traditional female range of topics (Alexander and Andersen 1993; Diekman et al. 2002; Rudman and Glick 2001, e.g.). I do not find evidence in the context I study that women are punished electorally for using aggressive language during electoral campaigns, but I show that women candidates are

disproportionate *targets* of aggression compared to male candidates.

Finally, the dissertation argues that male networks, especially when they constitute corrupt political networks, are also in the way of meaningful representation of women (Nistotskaya and Stensöta 2018; Franceschet and Piscopo 2008; Bjarnegård et al. 2018). The dissertation shows that only at low levels of corruption women empowerment is associated with improved representation, whereas when corruption is rampant, we observe *negative* effects of putting women in politics. The explanation for this negative effect is that women recruited through clientelistic networks might be used to channel the official party policy defined by male patrons, and nothing more. Women politicians are less likely to rebel against policies put forward by political parties, even when these go against their group interests, due to patriarchal gender norms and relatively weaker standing of women in highly corrupt societies (Arriola and Johnson 2014; Clayton and Zetterberg 2020). Further, women's presence in political institutions might be used as a way to legitimize decisions that otherwise hurt them as a group (Clayton et al. 2019b). Thus, this manuscript warns that it matters who are the women that serve in positions of power. Specifically, the main argument of the dissertation becomes that women's *high-quality* representation matters.

Taken as a whole, the dissertation demonstrates what we might be missing if we consider different aspects of representation in isolation. As an example, if we take the finding that introducing quotas on average helps improve substantive representation of women, we might miss that in highly corrupt settings changing the composition of institutions might simply reproduce old patterns. This focus on examining the conditions of substantive representation answers the call of previous review articles such as Cammisa and Reingold (2004) to move away from considering the "sameness-and-differences" between men and women in politics, and instead to focus on the conditions that make it possible for women to act as agents of change. The main reason for this gap in our collective knowledge is the relatively few global comparative studies in the field of gender politics, as the biggest advancements in the literature come from case-studies, and regional comparisons (mainly in Western Europe and democracies) (Htun and Weldon 2010). Importantly, the conditions that help or bar women from successfully implementing their policy priorities, just like gender-equality policies in general, vary the most *across countries*, rather than on local level. The

papers in this dissertation move in that direction by proposing, and putting to empirical tests with new cross-national time-series data, first, whether descriptive-substantive representation link exists, and second, what type of conditions limit or enable it. Thus, by considering the societal and institutional conditions of societies, the dissertation gives a more complete view about *how* societies might benefit from the inclusion of women; thus contributing to a growing field of comparative politics and gender.

Second, I draw evidence from multiple modes of representation, the legislature, cabinet and chief executive, as each institution has advantages as well as limits in terms of implementing policy priorities (Weldon 2002). That holistic view allows to compare the effects of various institutions, but is also more accurate, as none of these institutions work in isolation. Further, exploring specifically how the identity of the chief executive affects policies in comparative perspective, is a novel contribution in itself, as these types of studies are rare (Jalalzai 2019). The dissertation also considers the interplay between women at elite level and citizens, in particular, relationships with women's social movements. The consideration of multiple layers of representation gives insight into how women politicians form alliances horizontally with other institutions but also diagonally with citizen organizations, going beyond considering just the number of women representatives in governance, which presents another advancement in the literature of gender and politics.

This introductory chapter summarizes the main arguments, findings and implications from this compilation thesis. In doing so, I clarify some of the decisions I made during the writing of this dissertation. The introductory chapter aims also at making an independent contribution on its own. In particular the theoretical and the concluding discussions speak to the larger literature on representation, and what could the case of women mean for other under-represented groups, as well as clarify how the different dependent variables across the study relate to each other.

2 Theory

In modern democratic systems some type of political representation is the most common way of governance, where elected officials represent the voters

that chose them. Yet, scholars and policy-makers have struggled with pinpointing what good representation means and how individuals and groups can be best included in the governing process. Typically, representative government is understood as one that pursues the interests of the majority (Przeworski et al. 1999, p. 8-10). However, this definition leads to questions what happens to the interests of historically marginalized groups. This is important as, arguably, different groups have competing interests. The normative legitimacy of democracy rests on the assumption that everyone who is affected by a particular decision should be included in the process of taking that decision, and have at least the opportunity to influence policy outcomes that affect them (Young 2002). Thus, the idea about *inclusive representation* comes up as a way to ensure that the myriad of issues and preferences in a society are heard. The expectation is that 'descriptive representation', or the numerical presence in political institutions, should lead to 'substantive representation', meaning that representatives will use their positions to advocate for the interests of the group they represent (Mansbridge 2005; Sapiro 1981; Phillips 1995). One big part of normative research has been to clarify constitutes a group interest, and who is in best position to stand for those interests. The next sections engage with precisely those two questions focusing on the case of women, before turning to the question *why* representation should matter.

2.1 The dependent variable: what is to be represented?

The idea that equal political representation matters has its grounds in the notion that there should be politically relevant features that distinguish groups, that both those represented and the representatives need to be aware of (Sapiro 1981; Williams 2000). A useful example offered by Sapiro is the difference between being a woman and a red-head. Provided that women have shared problems and ideas for how to solve them, political representation is justified (Sapiro 1981).

One issue with that approach is that representatives typically do not stand for the interests of just one group, but rather they aim to serve the community, or the nation (Lovenduski 2005). Further, given than women comprise half of the world's population, they have various backgrounds in terms of most, if not all, politically relevant characteristics such education, ethnicity, social class. Therefore, it is quite natural to consider that women's

interests are not homogenous but vary greatly depending on which groups or individuals are considered, and the time period in question.

The challenge is rather to show that women in fact do have specific interests as a group. Scholars warn against essentialist assumptions that "an exogenously given, universally shared, fixed female identity" exists, and can be distilled into concrete policy preferences (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008, p. 396). Importantly, these sets of interests are not biological but are shaped by human agency; these are the specific political, economic, and social factors that define women's life options (Beckwith 2014). Beckwith (2014) provides a helpful example how women's experience is shaped by the social environment: consider the issues an average woman faces when it comes to reproductive policies and becoming a parent. Even if being pregnant is a biological agency, women's experience is shaped by social factors such as the access to sex education, birth-control, and safe abortion; as parents they rely on the quality of health-care services provided for them and for their children, the availability of paid parental leave but also cultural norms for the extent to which men get involved in child-care.

Beckwith (2014) makes another important terminological clarification. There is a difference between interests, issues, and preferences. Interests is the broadest and most fundamental category, which is defined by the major "gendered cleavages, social structures, and institutions (Htun 2005, p. 157). Issues, on the other hand, highlight a specific part of the more general interest; they are more immediate policies, e.g. legislation about safe abortion or providing parental leave. Finally, preferences refer to the limited options available to address a specific issue. For example, activists and politicians can have different preferences about what type of parental leave coverage is most appropriate for a specific country.

Importantly, even if we are able to identify a set of interests and distill them into specific issues common to women as a group, women do not necessarily need to also have the same preferences how to deal with those problems. In other words, women need not "share a list of policy proposals" (Weldon 2002, p. 1157), see also Williams (2000). For instance, when it comes to childcare, middle-class women might benefit from cheap child-care, while working class women might support expensive child-care if they are in that profession. Thus, a group perspective is more like an agenda of topics that need to be discussed - how to offer the best child-care services for the

whole society (Weldon 2002).

Finally, arguably, the wide variety of women's interests is "what makes them interesting", and worth exploring (Reingold and Swers 2011). As Mansbridge (1999) contends, precisely when interests are not crystallized, descriptive representation matters as for an out-of-group member it would be even more challenging to meaningfully to represent those interests. The system of aggregation of citizens interests is key here, identifying which are the community interests that merit representation (Williams 2000). Crystallizing the group interests is best achieved in interactions within the group (Weldon 2002), precisely because interests are socially constructed, making it even more important that women are present in politics as equals to men. The crystallization of what constitutes women's interests happens as result of continuous deliberations, both in society writ large but also on institutional level (Beckwith 2014). The implication from this argument is that while men are capable of representing certain women's *preferences*, including women in political dialogues at all level is important for the identification of, and later for working towards addressing, women's interests.

What sets of interests could be considered as women's? Young (2002) argues that the social positioning of groups determines the diverging understanding of societal problems and solutions. In the case of gender, historically, most societies have sustained norms where the the public sphere - including anything to do with politics and governance, have been reserved for men, while women should take care of the private sphere - this includes mainly responsibilities about the family and the home (Krook 2017; Phillips 1995). This has resulted in unequal position for women where they have performed most of the unpaid work, while being excluded from political and economic power (Phillips 1995). The literature delineates three broad streams about what constitutes women's specific interests: 1) women's civil and political rights; 2) topics that have to do with their care-taking obligations of others; and 3) issues relating to their own bodies. This distinction is based on the work of other comparative scholars such as for example Beckwith (2014); Swers (2002); Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler (2005); Smith (2014); Phillips (1995), and is explained further below.

First, when considering women's rights, historically, women *as women* have faced institutional and cultural discrimination (Htun and Weldon 2010). Despite the positive changes towards defending women's civil and political

rights such as the right to vote and the right to stand for elections, at least a third of the countries in the world still discriminate in some way for example women's property rights, labor force participation and freedom of movement (World Bank 2020).

The second area of what constitutes women's interests stems from the specific role women have in society as they are more often responsible for childcare, elderly and others in need, as well as for household-work (Box-Steffensmeier et al. 2004; Sapiro 1998). Therefore, women disproportionately suffer as a result of weak reproductive and child health services (Bhalotra and Clots-Figueras 2014). Such concerns often lead women to favor policies that improve these outcomes (Duflo 2012), and support policies that alleviate their traditional roles of taking care of others (Edlund and Pande 2002).

The third area relates to women's unique needs related to their bodies and health. These include but are not limited to issues with their reproductive rights such as access to birth control, prenatal and postnatal care (Beckwith 2014). Finally, women are also disproportionately victims of violence, including political, domestic and sexual violence (Krook 2017; Phillips 1995).

It is important to note that this classification is not an exhaustive list of interests women are concerned with, and is an over-simplification of a complex reality, where interests could vary depending on the time, context and community one decides to focus on. Yet, the classification provides a framework how we could systematically think about the interests that disproportionately affect women as a group versus men, and learn more about the consequences, and conditions of representation.

Throughout the papers, I focus on health-care as a proxy for women's interests for three main reasons. First, as mentioned above, women on average take a disproportionate share of care-taking obligations of others, including children, but also elderly and others who might be need (Box-Steffensmeier et al. 2004), meaning that when health-care services fail, women tend to take the biggest burden. Second, empirical research supports the notion across different contexts that women as voters and politicians prioritize health-care over other development issues (Clayton et al. 2019b; Wängnerud 2000). Third, previous studies on the topic consistently use health-care as a proxy for women's interests (Clayton and Zetterberg 2018; Miller 2008; Swiss et al.

2012). By choosing this focused approach, I am not able to cover all needs enlisted in the classification. Yet, I am able to compare my work to the previous body of the gender and politics literature, and enrich our understanding of the determinants of one key development outcome for the whole society, namely, health-care.

2.2 The independent variable: the path to representation

As defined by Pitkin's framework (1967) substantive representation means that policies, at least roughly, reflect the preferences of voters. Yet, an important caveat is that inclusion in politics does not always translate to representation (Htun 2016). The pathway to seeing policy interests realized into specific policies and even more so to specific real-world outcomes, is long and complicated (Escobar-Lemmon and Taylor-Robinson 2014). Let's consider one specific interest that concerns women: receiving the best possible treatment during pregnancy and childbirth.[6] As result of pressure from women civil society organizations, during parliamentary budget debates a woman parliamentarian raises the need for increased funding for prenatal care. However, the minister of finance decides that there are more pressing issues that need to be addressed at this moment. Does that act count as representation? The results that we get in terms of the effects of representation depend on the outcomes we consider.

From the simple example we can see that there are at least three points to be considered: 1) at which institutional level is representation happening; 2) what are the specific acts that actors undertake; 3) what counts as 'success'.

In terms of the first point, representation can occur in any level of government: in the ranks of legislature and its sub-committees; the executive - head of state/head of government, and the cabinet. Importantly, some venues might be more efficient than others to realize the interests at the dif-

[6]Naturally, not just the pregnant woman is affected in this situation but she is the one concerned to the largest extent.

ferent steps of the policy cycle. Thus, Weldon (2002) argues that multiple sources of representation need to be considered, as each mode has advantages but also its limits. For example, the head of state might be most important to lead the way in a specific policy reform but legislators might be in best position to see a proposal into a law. Further, Piscopo (2014) argues that numerical representation in either the legislature or executive is not enough if advocates for women's rights do not work across institutions to mobilize support for specific policies. This further motivates cross-institutional analysis rather than focusing on just one political arena.

Most of the studies investigating the descriptive-substantive link focus only on the legislature, and in particular the critical mass theory (Celis and Childs 2008). The argument is that only a small number of token women will not make a substantial difference but a critical mass is needed to make a change (Kanter 1977; Dahlerup 1988).[7] Female legislators could act to promote women's interests in multiple ways, for example, by putting women's issues on the political agenda and during parliamentary debates (Devlin and Elgie 2008; Clayton et al. 2017; Yoon 2011), building coalitions across party lines and with grass-root movements (Johnson and Josefsson 2016), adopting specific legislation (Wang 2013; Thomas 1994) and allocating more money from the budget for specific programs that benefit women (Clayton and Zetterberg 2018). Note, however, that more recently, the literature suggests a shift from critical mass to "critical actors" - those legislators, regardless of their gender, who take steps to promote policies for women (Childs and Krook 2009; Dahlerup 2006).

This focus on the legislature leaves a potentially important gap, as the executive is the institution where a lot of important decisions about the government are made (Jalalzai 2019), and to this date, the studies examining the effects of having female head of state or government are rare. Yet, descriptive representation should matter to the greatest when representatives are *incorporated* in the highest ranks of elected officials and in the dominant coalition (Browning et al. 1984; Preuhs 2007). For women's interests and

[7] This notion has also sparked a wave of adopting quotas, with at least 30 per cent.

needs to be met, the mere presence in government is not enough but women should occupy the highest leadership positions in governance (Smith 2014). Thus, given the power available to national leaders, we could expect that women in those positions will have the capacity and unique opportunity to make a difference towards realizing the preferences of women as a group.

Turning to the issue of what acts should be counted as successful representation, in one view, representation happens when citizen preferences are 'evidenced' in institutions in the form of public policy initiatives (Beckwith 2014, p. 33). The proponent of this definition puts focus on *initiatives* as mode of representation to highlight the fact that not all groups can get what they want all the time. Substantive representation as *process* is thus separated from representation as *outcome* (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008). The second aspect is much more difficult to achieve and does not always depend on women as actors.

However, other authors argue that representation is most meaningful when descriptive representation affects not only attitudes and individual behavior (where most research is focused), but whether real-world outcomes are also changed, is most crucial (Bratton and Ray 2002). This is where the current dissertation aims to contribute. Acknowledging that representatives act in an environment that is constraining, we should note that success depends on a number of factors. I aim to understand the conditions that determine successful outcomes of representation, which I term 'substantive representation' throughout the dissertation. Note that this use of terminology deviates somewhat from some other prominent work on the subject, where substantive representation stands for the simple act of standing for women's interests (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008). However, I argue that the steps taken to achieve policy change are only a mean that could lead to substantive representation. An important note is that even if we were not able to find evidence that women so far have been able to change policy outputs and outcomes, this would not undermine the worth of women's equal representation because women's inclusion holds democratic and normative value in its own right. My focus in this dissertation is to understand the *conditions* under which women are able to make a change, and achieve substantive representation.

The next section gives arguments regarding *why* we would expect that women in position of power will have effect on policy outcomes.

2.3 Why would representation matter?

The idea that politicians and institutions should mirror descriptively the composition of the population as a means of achieving meaningful representation of citizens goes back to J. S. Mill's work 1991, (1861). One radical suggestion in that direction is to ensure that all groups affected by a decision should be represented by a 'statistically representative sample' (Burnheim 2006). The argument is that given that ideas and opinions are ever changing, we can mainly rely on shared experiences and interests with our representatives for governance to be good. However, there are a number of arguments why descriptive representation might not be the best way to ensure that all preferences are expressed in politics.

Hannah Pitkin warns that focusing too much on how representatives *look like* takes away from the important issue of what representatives *do* (Pitkin 1967). In her view, the key issue should be whether interests are being represented in a responsive manner, thus warning that representation cannot be guaranteed through physical characteristics but it is a long reiterative process, which provides the "potential readiness to respond." This line of thinking suggests that you do not need to be a parent to make good laws for parents. In a functioning democracy, mechanisms of responsiveness to policy demands and accountability, ensure that any politician, no matter their background characteristics, can be successful. Further, in a simple Downsian model of voting, two parties compete to win votes in election, and the preferences of voters should converge to the median voter (Clots-Figueras 2012). Therefore, it would be enough for a group to be voters for their interests to be represented. In particular in democracies, the principle 'one man, one voice' should guarantee that everyone has an equal say in governance.

Another strand of the literature suggests that the danger of focusing too much on the identity of representatives is falling into the trap of "essentialism", where groups have an essential identity, which encompasses all members of that group and excludes everyone else (Mansbridge 1999). Thus, in the extreme, a woman could represent all women no matter their race, class, party affiliation, but could not represent a man with similar background characteristics. Instead, some literature suggests to focus on the actions of the individual representative, where any representative can be mindful of the interests of marginalized groups. In the argument of Wängnerud (2015)

gender-sensitive institutions are made up of by gender-sensitive *individuals*, who are the agents of change towards policies that improve the status of marginalized groups. Thus, both women and men can support women-friendly policies (Reingold 2008), just as members of any ethnic group can be mindful of the interests of other groups.

Young (2002) conceives representation as moving between moments of authorization and accountability (p. 129). Building on Pitkin, Young (2002) writes that a representative is not purely a delegate with a clear mandate, and not a trustee acting on their discretion. To achieve meaningful representation both representatives and citizens should actively and intentionally work on this process of representation. Representatives have the obligation to learn about their constituents and constantly expect accountability, and voters have the obligation to organize themselves and communicate their interests to other groups and to their representatives (ibid). Thus, to be represented means that your interests and values are looked after, understood and expressed (Young 2002). Yet, this higher level of representation does not necessarily happen by a person that *looks* like you.

In a final argument against focusing too much on the symbolism of descriptive representation, Swain (1995) conceives that minorities have bigger and more important roles and offices to take than being pre-occupied with only serving the interests of those they supposedly represent. Focusing too much on those group interests might play to the negative stereotypes that representatives from previously marginalized groups are unable to deal with larger societal problems but can only focus on the group interest they come from (Diekman et al. 2002).

In another view (the one that this dissertation follows most closely) equal voting rights are not enough for meaningful representation, but there should also be equality in terms of who the representatives *are*. Phillips (1995) puts forward the idea of 'politics of presence' as a way to ensure fair representation of social groups that have previously been silenced or marginalized. Phillips argues that due to the specific experience of women, politics dominated by men cannot address women's particular needs and interest. Importantly, Phillips clarifies that although the descriptive-substantive link is not *guaranteed*, presence of women in politics makes the realization of their interests *most likely*. That is because without the visible presence and voice of historically marginalized groups, it is unlikely that decision-makers from the

majority group would prioritize or even take into account the interests of the other groups (Reynolds 2013). Women politicians simply have a better understanding of women's preferences due to their own experience (Khan 2017; Sapiro 1981; Mansbridge 1999). The shared identity, experiences, and thus, "being one of us" seals the representatives loyalty to "our" interests (Mansbridge 1999). Importantly, empirical evidence from various contexts shows that indeed women parliamentarians view women as a group to be a special part of their constituents, and compared to their male counterparts, have more frequent contact with women organizations, and are more willing to work for more gender equal society (Wängnerud 2000; Thomas 1994; Hawkesworth 2003; Hawkesworth et al. 2001).

Second, women politicians' own preferences affect their decisions (Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004). As Phillips (1995) argues in their every-day work representatives have considerable autonomy, and rely on their own judgement, which is why it matters who the representatives are (p. 44). This is reasonable as not all issues can be negotiated in pre-election campaigns, making it even more important what the personal preference and experience of representatives are. That is particularly important in line of the findings that in practice representatives rarely embrace the "delegate role" (Reingold 2008). The empirical evidence about divergence in preference between women and men politicians is well summarized by Schwindt-Bayer (2006): "Regardless of whether the woman is a legislator in progressive Scandinavia or traditional Latin America, she places greater priority than her male counterparts on feminist issues and concern for children and the family" (p. 583). Importantly, there is congruence between expressed priorities by politicians and citizens. In a survey across 17 sub-Saharan African, conducted between 2008 and 2012, Clayton et al. (2019a) find that both women parliamentarians and women citizens rate higher on their priority list issues such as health-care, poverty reduction and women's rights, while their male counterparts prioritize infrastructure projects. Similarly, in Sweden in 1985, 1998, and 1994, Wängnerud (2000) reports that women voters prioritize family policy, social policy and health-care, at the same time as women parliamentarians across political parties also prioritize social welfare issues.

Thus, the dissertation holds that women's numerical presence in politics will be consequential for the extent to which women's specific issues are ad-

dressed. Importantly, given that women bring a different set of experiences and preferences to the table (Sapiro 1981; Khan 2017), in the dissertation I extend that argument that the inclusion of women will matter for the type and quality of ideas available in the policy-making process.[8] The argument is simple: given that women are the mathematical majority in the adult population in many countries, excluding or including them in political life has massive consequences for governance outputs and outcomes. Specifically, women's inclusions in politics will boost the number and variability of ideas available to policy-makers, and will improve the efficiency with which the best ideas are chosen. The argument draws on theories from economics that including women enriches the available talent pool and ideas (Esteve-Volart 2004). Specifically, if we imagine that talent is randomly distributed among the population, then excluding half of that population will result in significant losses. And as laid out above, those losses could pertain to important societal issues on which women put greater priority such as health-care.

In sum, in the previous sections I review some key (but not all) relevant arguments about why, or why not women's descriptive representation will matter for substantive representation. My take on that literature is that while I see that there are important normative reasons why including women in politics is justified, there are also instrumental arguments for their inclusion. Specifically, my expectation is that women's specific life experience will matter for the types of policies they bring to the table, which eventually will result in qualitative different policy outcomes. Next, let us consider the available evidence for this proposition from previous studies.

2.4 Existing empirical evidence

What are the main findings in the literature when it comes whether women representatives stand for women's interests (later referred to as the descriptive-substantive representation link)? Next, I briefly review two streams of stud-

[8]This argument is most clearly laid out in Paper 1 "Women's Political Empowerment and Economic Growth".

ies focusing on: 1) policy outputs; or 2) policy outcomes. Policy outputs refer to the actions that governments take such as adopting a specific legislation or budget, while outcomes are the results caused by the outputs, for example, infant mortality rates[9]. This is not an exhaustive review of the literature; instead a focus is placed on the issues that the thesis aims to address.

In a review of the research on the behavior, and changes brought by women in political office in the United States, Reingold (2008) concludes that overall throughout the whole policy cycle women in position of power, more than men, act for other women and their interests. Similarly, in another review article focusing on legislatures in democracies, Wängnerud (2009) concludes that although the results are mixed, the studies suggest that taken together female members of parliament contribute to improved situation for women writ large. However, both articles clarify that the process is complex, and there are a number of caveats to be considered.

2.4.1 Women's representation and policy outputs

The literature has examined the gender differences among politicians' policy priorities (as summarized in section 2.3) but also in terms of their behavior. In the U.S. there is ample evidence over several decades that women legislators are efficient policy leaders when it comes to women's rights and that they are as successful, or even more compared to men in getting their proposed legislation passed, particularly on feminist issues (Reingold 2008). They do that throughout the whole policy cycle, from serving on committees relevant to women's issues, to introducing and making sure legislation addressing women's issues is adopted (Thomas 1994; Swers 2002; Reingold 2003; Saint-Germain 1989; Wolbrecht 2002). Focusing on what women representatives say, research has found that women parliamentarians speak more frequently about issues that concern women than male politicians as shown

[9]See sub-section 2.5.3 for detailed discussion on this distinction in the context of my argument

by Clayton et al. (2017) in Uganda, and also more often ask written and oral questions on women's issues as shown in the German Bundestag (Höhmann 2019).

When comparing bill initiation behavior in Costa Rica and Colombia (1994–98 and 1998–2002), and in Argentina (1995 and 1999) Schwindt-Bayer (2006) finds that women are more likely to initiate bills related to women's issues, family, education and health-care (at the expense of bills on the economy and trade). However, in Latin America both policy successes and setbacks have happened (Piscopo 2014). In the study of Argentina, Htun et al. (2013) analyze the consequences of introducing gender quotas for women on a large dataset of bills submitted to the legislature between 1983 and 2007. They find that although the number of women's rights bill introduced increased, the approval rates have declined. The explanation for this finding is that women continue to be marginalized, and are unable to change the features of politics key for success such as power over agenda setting, committee structure, and partisan voting. For similar findings, see also the work by Franceschet and Piscopo (2008) arguing that female legislators succeed in the process of agenda building, but fail to actually influence the legislation. Htun (2016) concludes that in Latin America the presence of previously marginalized groups in decision-making bodies has not led to meaningful representation of interests. Inclusion has done little to change the fact that institutions are dominated by men, mostly from European descent.[10]

Further, a study of representation in U.S. states, Cowell-Meyers and Langbein (2009) finds that increased presence of women improved only 5 out of the 34 women-friendly policies they study, suggesting that other factors such as political party, religion and interest groups might condition whether initiatives undertaken by women are successful. Reher (2018) suggests that

[10]Important to note is that ever since this research was published, some policy advancements have been made in these countries. For example, at the end of 2020 Argentina's parliament legalized abortion, following decades of activism on part of pro-choice campaigners.

in Europe, the number of political parties explain why when women and men have diverging policy preferences, implemented policies are more likely to reflect the view of men. The conflicting findings presented could stem from the fact that the research comes from different settings, prompting to ask the question about the limitations of women's ability to successfully act depending on the institutional environment they face.

A closely related literature examines whether women can steer resource allocation at different level of governance. In Sweden, Svaleryd (2009) finds that women in local councils successfully shape the public spending, by redirecting funding to childcare and education, the priorities the study identifies are placed on highest level by the women representatives. Clayton and Zetterberg (2018) also report that globally the introduction of quotas for women is associated with higher spending for health-care. Finally, in parliamentary democracies, the gender composition of cabinet has also been shown to matter for the same outcome (Atchison and Down 2009). An important question that comes of this stream of research is which institutions drives the change. These different institutions do not operate in isolation, so how do they interact with each other?

2.4.2 Women's representation and policy outcomes

Both the reviews by Reingold (2008) and Wängnerud (2009) reach the conclusion that only a few previous studies have approached the link between descriptive and substantive representation by looking at the actual policy outcomes. However, given that representation guarantees a voice, not an outcome (Wiliarty 2010, p. 2), it is important to consider what the results are in practice.

Focusing on the citizen-level, research has found that the introduction of female suffrage in the United States in the beginning of the 20th century led to a sharp increase in health expenditure (about 35 per cent within a year) and a drop of 8 to 15 per cent in child mortality (Miller 2008). This is a remarkable change, that the author explains with the qualitatively different issues brought to the political agenda. On elite level, a number of studies focus on estimating the effect across various contexts. Bratton and Ray (2002) show evidence that increasing the representation of women on local level in Norway is associated with improved child-care coverage. In India increased women's political representation in state legislatures is as-

sociated with improved public provision of antenatal and childhood services (Bhalotra and Clots-Figueras 2014). Also in India in urban areas, the gender of politicians affects the educational levels of individuals for those who grow up in the districts politicians were elected from (Clots-Figueras 2012). Comparative studies also support the descriptive-substantive representation link. Across 102 developing countries from 1980 to 2005, Swiss et al. (2012) find that descriptive representation of women is associated with increased rates of measles immunizations, DPT (diphtheria, pertussis and tetanus) immunizations, infant survival, and child survival.

However, similar to the review form the previous section on policy outputs, the research on policy outcomes also shows that not all outcomes are improved as results of women's representation. When looking at women's representation in Swedish local level assemblies between 1970 and 2009, Wängnerud and Sundell (2012) find that numerical representation is associated with improvement only for some outcomes from the everyday life of women such as income, full vs part-time employment and distribution of parental leave but not so much on unemployment, health-case indicators and poverty. The explanation the authors offer is that for some dimensions, what matters more is the general transformations of society.

2.5 Conditions to the descriptive-substantive representation link

An important point of departure for this dissertation is that addressing women's interests can be (at least in part) boosted through having more women in decision-making bodies, who will prioritize precisely the policy outcomes most relevant to women. However, the brief review of the literature on representation shows that the mere introduction of more women in position of political power will not automatically lead to this improvement.

Naturally, the extent to which women are able to make a change towards realization of women's interests might be limited by individual characteristics such as party affiliation, ideology, seniority, the type of political office women occupy, or which political party is in power at the moment (Wängnerud 2009). Just as not every woman politician is a feminist as Clots-Figueras (2011) shows in their study of India, men can also support policies that lift women. What we need to understand better is the con-

ditions under which this happens (Reingold 2008). As Wängnerud (2015) writes, "*changes do not just happen*", and the process of achieving substantive representation from descriptive representation is not linear but rather complex and depending on many different factors.

A call in the recent literature is to examine the institutional frameworks under which women politicians, more than their male counterparts, represent women's interests in practice (Celis and Childs 2008). Given that the biggest variation in gender equality policies *and* institutional conditions happens on country level, explaining the global variation in gender equality is key (Htun and Weldon 2010). Yet, a large share of the progress in gender and politics research so far is based on case studies, established democracies or regional comparisons, thus, potentially providing a distorted picture of what really drives gender-equal policies on country level (Htun and Weldon 2010, p. 207-208). This global perspective will also broaden the type of research in the gender and politics literature, where a lot of progress has been done in terms of analyzing interviews and surveys with politicians to examine only the differences in preferences and behavior between men and women (Cammisa and Reingold 2004).

Thus, providing a comparative global perspective could help to understand better the conditions that stimulate or prevent better representation. However, Htun and Weldon (2010) warn that not one single condition can explain why countries decide to adopt policies that advance gender equality. Dictatorships from the Middle East to Latin America have adopted progressive family policies just like democracies. Women's groups have been key in advancing women's rights in some context, while in others civil society organizations have actually opposed issues such as access to safe abortion and parental leave (ibid). Thus, analyzing the institutional and societal conditions together becomes key.

One important study in that direction is the work by Schwindt-Bayer and Mishler (2005) who operationalize the four dimensions of Pitkin's understanding of representation, namely, formal, descriptive, substantive and symbolic representation, and tests the links between each one of them. Using a structural equation modeling, the authors find that descriptive representation increases legislatures' responsiveness to women's policy concerns as measured by political and social rights, maternity leave, marriage and divorce laws (substantive representation), as well as perceptions of legitimacy

(symbolic representation). Formal representation (electoral institutions) influences both women's descriptive representation and symbolic representation. However, the effect of symbolic representation, operationalized with trust in the legislature, is less significant than the theory suggests.

The study presents a great advancement in terms of considering these four dimensions of representation together, and, as I see it, opens at least a three sets of questions for future research, where I have made contribution through this dissertation. First, given the acknowledgment that the dimensions of representation do not operate in isolation, it is important to consider the interplay between them. As an example, one question we could ask is how the interaction looks like between electoral institutions and the share of women in parliament when we consider their joint effect on substantive representation. Similarly, given the theorized effect of descriptive representation on symbolic representation (meaning the presence of women in politics would increase the trust in institutions by women citizens, and would activate their political engagement further), we could also expect a joint effect on substantive representation. Second, the operationalization of key concepts could be expanded. As section 2.4.2 demonstrates, policy outcomes are one understudied area in the literature of politics and gender, meaning a contribution to the literature would be to consider the effects on substantive representation operationalized with concrete policy outcomes such as infant and child mortality. Further, building on previous research on the institutional and societal determinants of policy successes, we could expand the sets of conditions we consider. Third, a natural extension of the study is to broaden the analyzed sample as it only covers 31 democracies between 1995 and 1997. A longer time frame and wider selection of countries will provide a more comprehensive picture about the effects of representation.

The next two sub-sections summarize the arguments made across the papers in the dissertation about how: 1) the institutional, and 2) the societal environment affect substantive representation; thus, outlining the key contributions of the dissertation.

2.5.1 Institutional conditions

Paper 3 "Gendered accountability: when and why do women's policy priorities get implemented?" most clearly considers the institutional determi-

nants of successful representation. Co-authored with Ruth Carlitz, the paper argues that the descriptive-substantive link is conditioned by particular aspects of formal representation – the institutional rules and procedures through which female representatives are chosen. The paper looks at three sets of institutions: the electoral system, existence of quotas and the state of democracy.

More specifically, the paper builds on previous research showing that representative institutions determine the process of feminizing politics, or the entry of women in politics (Lovenduski 2005). However, the effects on substantive representation are unclear. Previous research has shown that single-member systems (SMD) produce two-party systems which over-represent the majority, compared to proportional systems which produce multi-party systems, which in turn are better at representing the interests of the minorities (Williams 2000). In an empirical test using data from 2005 to 2013 in Germany, Höhmann (2019) shows that in proportional systems women's substantive representation is realized to a higher extent. The explanation is that in those systems, women are less dependent for re-election based on local responsibilities; giving women more opportunities to be entrepreneurial and focus on women's interests, without fearing electoral disadvantage. On the contrary, in Argentina, Barnes (2016) finds that party-centered systems, such as the proportional one, marginalize women.

Further, the adoption of gender quotas is the most prominent policy solution to ensure female representation in politics. Quotas reflect existing or emerging notions of equality and representation, frequently influenced by international norms (Krook 2006). A prominent argument in the literature is that quotas will create a "mandate effect," obligating female legislators elected under such institutions to act on behalf of women (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008). Furthermore, by ensuring that women are present in the legislature, quotas should improve the likelihood that the interests of "women-as-group and women-as-differentiated-individuals" will be represented (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008). This should happen as their voice will be more frequently heard during parliamentary debates (Clayton et al. 2017), and eventually their policy priorities will be implemented (Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004). In a competing view, political elites may adopt quotas for strategic purposes. In particular, authoritarian governments may adopt gender quotas as a means of maintaining dominance (Donno and

Kreft 2018; Bjarnegård and Zetterberg 2016; Bush and Zetterberg 2020). The representatives elected through quotas might also be perceived as less prestigious, and could be sidelined (Franceschet and Piscopo 2008).

Thus, the existing research is inconclusive about the institutional effects on substantive representation. In Paper 3 we adopt the stance that institutions which make descriptive representation easier, should *on average* also be beneficial for substantive representation. Women will simply be more likely to be elected, and therefore, able to stand for women's issues. However, the concern that corruption and authoritarian practices would limit the ability of politicians to act, no matter their gender, is a valid one, and I consider it next.

Democracy could strengthen the likelihood that descriptive representation would lead to substantive representation, as constituents have the opportunity to hold their representatives accountable (Williams 2000). A prominent argument in the democratic accountability literature is that not delivering on citizens' expectations might result in elections loss (Olson 2000). Empirically, the literature has also found a strong relationship between democracy and development (Gerring et al. 2012; Wang et al. 2018), in particular, when focusing on competitive elections and accountability as the main mechanism. We could relate that mechanism to the literature on representation to argue that thanks to symbolic representation, women citizens could raise their expectations towards the elected female representatives, and elections could be used as a check-point for the ensuring that their interests are met. However, on the other hand, in non-democracies, advancing women's rights might not be clashing with autocrats interest. Autocrats might be focused on limiting political freedom, and allow representatives to act in policy areas deemed 'benign' or essential (Forman-Rabinovici and Sommer 2019). Thus, the policy areas where women exercise control, might be less threatening to autocrats, while allowing leaders to gain legitimacy by advancing women's priorities. Using database of 178 countries from 1995 to 2013, Forman-Rabinovici and Sommer (2019) give evidence that the share of women in the legislature is associated with reproductive rights for women, higher spending for health-care and education. Weighing these two conflicting arguments on balance, my expectation is that women will be more likely to implement policies in the interest of their (female) constituents in democracies.

The next section highlights that informal institutions could influence the way formal institutions work, and thereby affect women-friendly outcomes. In the dissertation I focus on two negative and one positive societal conditions, namely, hostile environment, corruption networks, and women citizen engagement.

2.5.2 Societal conditions

Culture of discrimination has led to men being ”the standard” in the public life, politics and economics, while women have been excluded, destined to be mainly occupied by taking care of the private sphere (children and family) (Htun and Weldon 2010; Krook 2017). Because of that division, women experience a specific set of constraints when trying to enter politics - as minimum, they face stereotypes of being weak or unfit, and at worst, face psychological or physical harassment (Htun and Weldon 2010; Krook 2017; Mansbridge and Shames 2008). As summarized by Lovenduski (2005) the most difficult obstacle to women entering politics is the culture of masculinity in political institutions, such as stereotypes and hostile environment, male networks and working hours incompatible with family life. Paper 5 ”Norms and rage: Gender and social media in the 2018 US mid-term elections”, co-authored with Steven Wilson, most directly engages with the issues of stereotyping and violence in politics.

The paper argues that gender stereotypes women face are pervasive when evaluating the personal characteristics of candidates. Stereotypes about what women ought to be - kind, warm, compassionate, and family-oriented (Lee and Lim 2016; Huddy and Terkildsen 1993) clash with the stereotypes that the qualities most valued in leaders are being strong, assertive, efficient, goal-oriented (Lee and Lim 2016; Alexander and Andersen 1993). This results in prejudice against female candidates because demonstrating effective leadership simultaneously implies being a ‘bad’ woman according to traditional gender norms (Lee 2013; Lee and Lim 2016). This finding is supported in experimental work where task-oriented, agentic and competent women are perceived more negatively than other leaders, and are seen as lacking warmth and insufficiently ‘nice’ (Forsyth et al. 1997; Fiske et al. 2002; Rudman and Glick 2001). Further, typically, voters believe male candidates can handle masculine issues such as foreign policy, crime, economic issues, better than women, who are better at handling social issues - for example, health-care

and education (Alexander and Andersen 1993; Sapiro 1981; Kahn 1993). A potential negative consequences is that female candidates for office might be perceived as only being able to represent group interests and not society in general (Diekman et al. 2002). At the same time, female issues receive relatively less attention by the mainstream media, which might hurt the attention women candidates get (Kahn and Fridkin 1996).

Thus, the paper argues that maintaining culture of patriarchal dominance and traditional division of roles in society, are the main barriers standing in front of the meaningful participation of women as a group in politics. Stereotypes could hurt women's electability, and can even cause violent backlash against those that dare to break the norms, including online and in-person bullying and mocking to threats for, or actual murder or rape (Krook 2017). Another strand of the literature argues that once women run for office, they are just as likely to be elected as men (Fox and Lawless 2004). In this view, voters are not biased against women candidates but instead the gender gap in who runs for office is explained with lower encouragement on behalf of political recruiters (e.g. party leaders or other elected officials), and women view themselves as not qualified enough (even if they are as qualified as men). Yet, even small differences in treatment, biases and stereotypes can 'accumulate' over time and result in unsurmountable obstacles for women's political careers (Valian 1999; Du et al. 2021), which could explain the over-representation of men in politics.

Moving to another barrier in the way of substantive representation, Paper 4 "Women's Political Representation, Good Governance and Human Development", co-authored with Sirianne Dahlum and Constanza Petrarca, argues that the success of descriptive representation is contingent on the levels of corruption in the country.[11] Only at low levels of corruption, we should see political outcomes improved as result of women's enhanced standing in

[11] Another important mediating factor that future research could consider is state capacity. Although some authors consider corruption to be a good proxy for state capacity, a more precise definition is offered by Lindvall and Teorell (2016). In that view, state capacity is the congruence between adopted policies and the outcome.

politics. By contrast, in contexts of rampant corruption greater female representation might have negative effects on the same development outcomes that their presence is supposed to improve (Nistotskaya and Stensöta 2018).

The negative effect could be observed because women political representation has become the international norm across all regimes types (Towns 2010; Krook 2010). Yet, in many cases women's political empowerment might not translate into corruption reduction and policies that address women's interest but, on the contrary, women might be used to reinforce the status quo or to advance the interests of narrow segments of the political elite that helped to install women in position of power.[12] That could happen in contexts where there is no "room for women to maneuver" for politicians to make a difference based on their experience and policy programs (Stensöta and Wängnerud 2018, p. 4). Bjarnegård et al. (2018) warn that if candidates, appointed through gender quotas, are selected from the existing corrupt political networks, then they will continue to follow the same corrupt party line. That could happen because informal male party elites use nepotism to advance women that they can control (relatives or politically inexperienced women) (Nistotskaya and Stensöta 2018; Franceschet and Piscopo 2008). In this setting advancement in politics is arranged through informal channels, demanding from women politicians to follow the political lines drawn by the patrons. Studying the case of Russia, Nistotskaya and Stensöta (2018) argue that women in the national legislature "stay absolutely within the bounds [set by their male patrons], and say what they're told to and no more"; thus, supporting traditional values rather than advancing women's actual policy interests. A case in point is the case of decriminalization of domestic violence in February 2017, where women politicians supported the policy proposal. Similarly, in the case of Argentina, Franceschet and Piscopo (2008) show the presence of women in the legislature did not increase their political power to implement meaning-

[12] An alternative argumentation is that women entering politics in greater numbers could have beneficial effects on reducing corruption but only in the short term (Bauhr and Charron 2021).

ful change.

To explain the *negative* effects from increasing women's political participation on development outcomes, we reason that in highly corrupt societies, patriarchal gender norms are particularly strong at the same time as women have relatively weaker standing in politics; that is because women tend to have weaker clientelistic networks, and rely solely on the political party to retain their positions (Clayton and Zetterberg 2020; Arriola and Johnson 2014). This could explain why women are more likely than men to follow the party line completely, and support policy decisions that go directly against their preferences and interests as a group (Clayton and Zetterberg 2020). Furthermore, the presence of women in political institutions can be used to legitimize decisions that worsen the situation for women (Clayton et al. 2019b).

Together with the institutional determinants, Paper 3 proposes that the descriptive-substantive link will be strengthened when female political engagement is higher. The paper advances the idea about "gendered accountability", or that the accountability link should be the strongest between women politicians and their constituents. Empirically, research has shown women politicians view women citizens as special constituents, and have strong connections with women's associations (Wängnerud 2000). On the side of citizens, symbolic representation, as put by Simien (2015) might be particularly important, as the presence of women politicians might break stereotypes that politics is a 'man's game'. Indeed, previous research has shown that having more women in politics enhances political engagement on part of women citizens (Chattopadhyay and Duflo 2004; Barnes and Burchard 2013). This more active participation is important as civil society actors enhance the effectiveness of institutions, including parliaments (Goetz and Jenkins 2005; Mechkova et al. 2018; Lührmann et al. 2020). Therefore, civil society activism has both the potential to steer policy directions, but also to strengthen both arms of accountability (information-seeking and sanctioning) (Goetz et al. 2008; Lührmann et al. 2020). Weldon (2002) goes as far as arguing that civil society movement and political mobilization might be even more important for group representation than the presence in institutions due to the potential civic movements have for generating change. In particular, interactions *within* the social group are important for crystallizing what interests should be represented at political level. Studying the

impact on policies on violence against women in a cross-national study in 36 democratic countries in 1994, Weldon (2002) finds that women's movements and women's policy agencies are more effective mode of representation than presence in the legislature.

So far, we have looked at the main arguments lifted in the dissertation. In the next and final sub-section of the theory chapter, I present a model which demonstrates how the different institutional and societal conditions work together to influence policy outcomes in a more practical perspective.

2.5.3 Improving policy outcomes via female representation: A complex path

The path to implementing concrete policy outcomes is long and complicated. Its success depends on the coordination of multiple actors from different levels - governments, bureaucrats, individuals and communities. As an example let us take a closer look at the efforts needed to reduce child mortality, one of the dependent variables in this dissertation. Figure 2 shows a shortened adapted version of the framework developed by Tanner et al. (2014) to illustrate the complex process of interventions (policy inputs and outputs) needed to reduce child mortality as the policy outcome.

The input interventions happen on government level, and include putting in place a comprehensive strategy for health-care, which relies on adequate research, is substantiated by appropriate legislation, and summons enough resources (financial and human capital) to implement it. The specific interventions on the input side go beyond policies in the health services (such as providing trained medical staff and equipment), and include also adequate services from sectors such as education, energy and transportation that will ensure the success of any healthcare-specific intervention. Finally, changing the behavior of individuals and communities is also included in the input side, where important interventions include informational campaigns for mothers and communities about safe practices to take care of children. These can include, for example, information about breastfeeding or campaigns aimed at increasing the confidence of mothers in the health-care system. (Note the difference with the literature from political science cited above, where the budget and the legislative framework are a policy output.)

When applied to my theoretical framework, the input side of the process

relates to who is in government; are women represented to a sufficient extent, and thus able to influence what type of legislation, resources and policies are produced at this level.

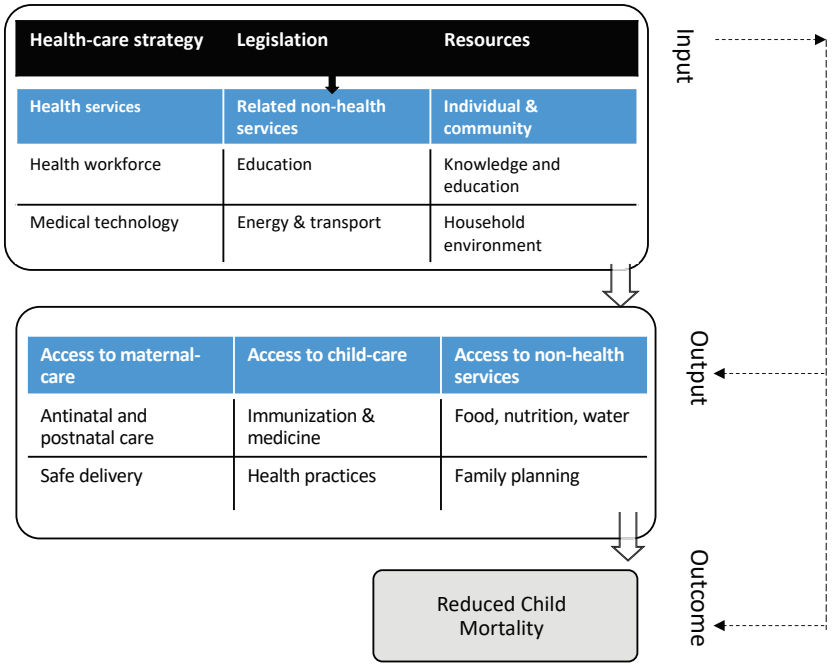

Figure 2: Sketch of interventions reducing child mortality. Based on Tanner et al (2014)

Looking at the next level presented in Figure 2, we see that the interventions from the input side feed into the programs from lower level, output side. These include specifically improving the access to maternal and child-care. The interventions here are summarized into antenatal and postnatal care for mothers and babies, as well as the provision of vaccines, medicine

and adequate health practices during a child's life. This box includes also other basic needs of families such as access to clean water and nutritious food, as well as family planning.

An important caveat, highlighted by Tanner et al. (2014), is that *most* causes of child (and maternal) deaths are preventable, as clinical treatments are well known and inexpensive. Even so, progress in those two outcomes is slower compared to other development outcomes, as measured by the Millennium Development Goals. As the report outlines the reasons for this slower change are complex, and involve efforts from governments, practitioners, and individual families. Thus, the problem is not only technical (as knowledge is already available) but also political, requiring concentrated efforts to activate and successfully implement the interventions at each step of this long and complex process.

My dissertation posits that these shortcomings could be at least partially addressed by ensuring better representation of women at the highest level of this implementation chain. Yet, the conditions under which this happens matter to a great extent. These include institutional conditions such as parliamentary quotas that will ensure the presence of women but also societal conditions. Figure 2 refers directly to cultural practices and norms practiced by the community, which might hinder or help the successful implementation of policies. For example, rampant corruption might be the reason why resources do not ultimately reach families.

To sum up, my dissertation is ultimately concerned with how improvement in policy outcomes - lowering infant and child mortality, happens. Both of these measures are the dependent variable in two of the papers of the dissertation (manuscript 3 and 4). To understand the drivers of reducing mortality, I also study the output side from governance (in the implementation literature termed input). Specifically, papers 2 and 3 are concerned with health-care spending as dependent variable. Further, paper 5 examines how candidates for office talk about political issues; thus, framing a potential health-care strategy. Thus, the dissertation aims to study several observable steps from the implementation chain to reduce infant and child mortality by mapping the conditions under which this happens.

3 Data, Research design and Methods

3.1 Data

The present dissertation contributes to the field of comparative politics of gender by making use of global time-series cross-sectional data sets. The reasons to choose these types of data are three-fold: First, the biggest variation in gender equality and institutional conditions is observed on country level (rather than sub-nationally). Second, the variables of interest are generally slow-moving. As an example, it could take a generation or more for societal norms about gender equality to change. Similarly, as discussed in the previous section, mortality rates are also hard to address, and it might take one election cycle or more for elected politicians to go through all the steps in the policy implementation cycle. Third, the proposed mechanisms are general in nature rather than limited to a specific geographic region or historic period. Although the exact application of the mechanisms will vary depending on the region and time-frame in question, my expectation is that the general mechanisms will work universally (e.g. rampant corruption will be in the way of empowerment leading to better substantive representation across different geographical and historical settings). Thus, by using long-time series and large number of countries, I am able to make comprehensive tests of the relationship of interest, and compare the effects of different institutional and societal conditions - a main task of the dissertation.

The specific data sources are discussed in each paper but, in brief, I utilize data on *infant and child mortality rates* as main proxy for governance outcomes that are higher on women's policy agenda compared to men. The variables measure the number of deaths prior to age of one and five respectively, per 1000 live births per year. The base variable is drawn from Gapminder, with additional data imputed from Clio-Infra, accessed through the V-Dem dataset (Coppedge et al. 2021). Data on domestic general government health expenditure as percentage of GDP is available from the World Bank (Bank 2014).

Turning to the independent variables, I use several measures to cap-

ture women's political representation. Data on the gender of the head of state/head of government, whoever is the de-facto leader, is available from (Nyrup and Bramwell 2020). The share of women in the legislature is extracted from V-Dem (Coppedge et al. 2021). Finally, I use V-Dem's index called women's political empowerment (WPE) (v2x_genpp), which consists of two measures: share of women in parliament, and the expert coded indicator Power distributed by gender (Sundström et al. 2017). The latter indicator captures the perceptions of coders about women's empowerment beyond the legislature. Finally, the data on the institutional and societal conditions also come from the V-Dem data set (Coppedge et al. 2021).

Paper five uses a different type of data, as the paper zooms on one specific election. We use own data collection to capture the dynamics before the 2018 U.S. mid-term elections on Twitter. We gathered all tweets posted by political candidates as a measure of candidate behavior. To operationalize female and male issues, we leverage the existing work by Evans and Clark (2016), who identified specific topic areas traditionally relegated to the male or female sphere of political discussion on Twitter during the 2012 House elections. Using their typology, we identified which of our political keywords would be male, female, or neither. Further, we used their existing list of keywords as additional signifiers of male vs. female topics. For example, within the female category we distinguish between topics related to health-care, sexual assault, family, etc. We also updated terms for the specific context of the 2018 elections (for instance, words associated with the Kavanaugh hearing).

Table 3 lists which measures are used for each paper as dependent and independent variable, as well as the number of countries (N) and time-period analyzed.

The next section summarizes the methods I have used to answer the main questions.

3.2 Methodological approach

I take a comparative approach to studying the questions about the effects of descriptive representation. One important caveat is that, for this type of cross-country study, researchers must rely on observational data. However, this type of analysis brings a host of endogeneity concerns, stemming from three main sources: reversed causality, omitted variable bias and issues with

data quality. I explain next my main modeling choices and how I have addressed endogeneity concerns.

Across four of the papers, the unit of analysis is country-year.[13] The benchmark estimation used is ordinary least square regression (OLS). Across the different papers with longer time series (Paper 1, 2 and 3) we also use 5- and 10-year panels, as an attempt to account for trends, mitigating autocorrelation and smoothing out measurement error. To mitigate concerns with reversed causality, I typically use 5-year lags but all papers test for lag structures closer or further away in time, and also show correlations with reversed structure (the dependent variable measured ahead of time). Further, I always cluster the errors by country to account for panel-level heteroskedasticity and autocorrelation.

To address omitted variable bias, the papers discuss individually the rationale for including various factors we see as most likely confounders. Examples include ideology, economic growth, international aid, and state capacity. When deciding on which variables to include in a model, it is also important to consider post-treatment bias. Paper 1 discusses female labor participation as one variable that might cause such bias. While it can affect both the election of women in politics (larger pool of qualified women), larger participation of women in the economy also enhances growth. Thus, controlling for such mediating factors could block off relevant indirect effects that we might want to capture with the estimated overall relationship.

The next strategy to address omitted variable bias is to include country-fixed effects, which account for time persistent factors such as social norms, or geography, which might explain why Sweden is more gender equal than Turkey. Fixed effects models usually perform well in terms of unbiasedness but are not appropriate when we want to estimate the effects of time-invariant variables, or if the theory predicts that there might be level effects (Plümper et al. 2005). Further, time trends might explain the developments both in empowerment and development outcomes like infant mortality. That is why all papers also include models with year-fixed effects, which are es-

[13] The exception is Paper 5, where the analysis is on candidate-level.

timated using only the within-year variation in the treatment. A major problem with the country and year fixed-effects specification is that it is quite inefficient as it wipes a lot of the variation, potentially creating high chances of type-I error (Mummolo and Peterson 2018). Nevertheless, given that unbiased and efficient alternatives do not exist (Plümper et al. 2005), some combination of country- and country-year fixed effects models is widely used in the literature of democracy and development writ large, as well as the gender and politics literature (Acemoglu et al. 2019; Gerring et al. 2012; Persson and Tabellini 2006; Gottlieb et al. 2016; Clayton and Zetterberg 2018).

Given that the true data generating process in observational data is unknown, my approach throughout the dissertation has been to test the stability of the main results (estimated through two-way fixed effects models), by using alternative estimation strategies, model specifications, control variables, and lag-structures to make sure that the results are not driven by sample issues or a particular model specification. An alternative specification to the very strict two-way fixed effects model is to include panel-corrected standard errors and a lagged dependent variable on the right-hand side as advised by Beck and Katz (1995) to account for dynamic effects and autocorrelation in time series data (Keele and Kelly 2005). This model specification is more efficient but could potentially produce biased estimates (Plümper et al. 2005), which is why I only use it in combination with the very strict two-way fixed effects model. Another more efficient model (compared to two-way FE) I use as robustness check is system-GMM estimator, which is particularly good for slow-moving variables (such as institutions) and are also designed to address endogeneity concerns (Arellano and Bover 1995; Blundell and Bond 1998). In paper 1, we also use error correction models, to distinguish between short- and long-run effects on the dependent variable (De Boef and Keele 2008). Finally, paper 5 uses matching methods, through which we are able to find control units most similar to the treated units on a set of important observed covariates (Stuart 2010). As shown by (Imai et al. 2018), these methods have two main advantages: improving the validity of causal inference in observational studies, and decreasing the dependency on model selection. A similar approach is used by (Garikipati and Kambhampati 2020) as estimation strategy to answer the question whether the gender of the leader matter for response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Several of the papers also include placebo outcomes. For example paper 5, where the dependent variable is budget for health, I also estimate models with budget for the military, education, and expenses for health-care coming from external sources (other than the government) - all of these outcomes are not expected to be related to the independent variables. This estimation strategy strengthens our belief that the results are not simply driven by improvement in outcomes across the board, but there is indeed a meaningful relationship with health-care.

In sum, the cross-country time-series analysis undertaken in the dissertation limits the extent to which we can establish causality in the studied relationship, given that the papers are only able to show correlational evidence. Although I have worked with several estimation strategies, we still need to acknowledge the limitations of the research design and endogeneity concerns. Despite that, together with the theoretical foundations, the analysis in the dissertation provides important insights into the relationship between descriptive and substantive representation. Specific mechanisms can then be further investigated in case studies or in an experimental setup.

Table 3: Overview of the five studies.

	Title	N	DV	Main findings
1	*Women's Political Empowerment and Economic Growth*	182	1) Economic growth 2)Technological change	WPE is positively related to subsquent economic growth and technological change. The strongest correlation is with the aggregated concept, even though the three components are also, individually, related to growth.
	Main argument	**TS**	**Independent vars**	**Conditions**
	Institutions that lead to increased capacity for women - defined by greater choice, agency and participation in decision-making, advance technological change, and thereby stimulate economic growth, through 1) increasing the number and variability of new ideas that enter the economy, and 2) the selection of best ideas.	1789-2019	Index of WPE: 1) political representation; 2) freedom of choice; and 3) voice	The results are the strongest in non-Western countries and earlier time periods.
	Title	**N**	**DV**	**Main findings**
2	*Women Leaders: Exploring the Effects of the Chief Executive Gender on Budget Composition in Comparative Perspective*	155	1) Domestic health-care expenditure . 2) Placebo outcomes, expenditure on: education, military, health-care from external sources..	Having a woman chief executive is associated with subsequent higher government expenditure for health-care but only when women hold the de-facto power..
	Main argument	**TS**	**Independent vars**	**Conditions**
	The descriptive-substantive theory, in combination with political incorporation theory, suggest that chief executives are in unique position to implement priorities of the group they represent, as they have both the capacity and resource to make a change.	2000-2016	Gender of the chief executive.	Weak evidence about interaction with the leaders' ideology and with share of women in parliament.
	Title	**N**	**DV**	**Main findings**
3	*When and Why Do Women's Policy Priorities Get Implemented?*	45	1) Infant and child mortality 2) Health-care budget 3) Placebo outcomes: Electrification and Military budget	Women's representation in the legislature is robustly associated with reduced infant and child mortality, at least partially explained by increased budgets for health-care.

	Main argument	TS	Independent vars	Conditions
	Women political representatives are more likely to implement policies that are prioritized by women as a group; however, this relationship is not automatic, and it only occurs under specific societal and institutional conditions.	1958-2015	Share of women in parliament	The descriptive-substantive representation is magnified when women are more active in civil society life, and the effects appear in countries with gender quotas and proportional electoral systems but are not restrained to democracies.
	Title	**N**	**DV**	**Main findings**
	Women's Political Empowerment and Good Governance	182	Infant and child mortality.	WPE promotes development only if corruption is at low levels. Under conditions of rampant corruption, WPE is associated with higher levels of infant and child mortality.
	Main argument	**TS**	**Independent vars**	**Conditions**
4	In conditions of rampant corruption, women's political inclusion might not result in positive societal changes. Instead, women could be co-opted by the dominant elite to maintain the status-quo, or channel interests for the narrow part of the lite, instead of working to advance development.	1900-2018	Index of WPE: 1) political representation; 2) freedom of choice; and 3) voice	Levels of corruption.
	Title	**N**	**DV**	**Main findings**
	Gender and Social Media in the 2018 U.S. Elections	USA	Topics covered as part of electoral campaign on Twitter.	Female candidates championed the traditional "women's issues". We did not find evidence on negative electoral consequences from this focus.
	Main argument	**TS**	**Independent vars**	**Conditions**
5	Social media gives women candidates the opportunity to bring the focus on important societal issues such as health-care and the environment, traditionally considered as being "women's issues". We investigate the stereotype that this would hurt women electorally.	2018	Gender of political candidates both for congressional and gubernatorial office.	Differences remain across political party ideology, candidates' age, previous experience, incumbency, and gender of the opponent.

4 Empirical findings

Table 3 above summarizes the main arguments and findings of my dissertation. In this section I elaborate on the main findings of my dissertation. I also clarify how they address the two main research questions about the effects of descriptive on substantive representation, and the conditions that limit this relationship.

The first paper of the dissertation (under review), co-authored with Sirianne Dahlum and Carl Henrik Knutsen, makes the broadest argument about institutions advancing women's political empowerment also affecting economic growth through technological change. This happens as women's inclusion increases the quality and number of ideas introduced in the economy. The first dependent variable in the study is GDP per capita, and the second - technological change, measured with Total Factor Productivity. The latter measure is a calculation of the residual growth after removing growth from physical capital, human capital and labor supply (Knutsen 2015). The argument is interrogated with data from 182 countries across 221 years. We find robust evidence that WPE is associated with subsequent GDP per capita growth and technological change. The relationship remains stable across different models specifications - using OLS estimator, country- and year-fixed effects, and system-GMM models. We also account for what we see as most likely confounders such as the initial differences in economic development, democracy levels, state capacity, and past growth trends. As predicted by our theory, the individual dimensions of WPE - representation, voice, and civil liberties, are also statistically significant predictors of growth but the strongest correlation is with the overall measures for WPE. The paper gives helpful examples to understand the size of the effect, namely, that going from the first quartile score on WPE (.20 - Italy in the 1930s) to the third quartile score (.61 Australia in the 1950s) is associated with an increase at about 0.9 percentage points. After 10 years, the difference in growth in GDP per capita between these two hypothetical cases is substantial - it would be about 9 percentage points. The assessment of potential heterogeneity effects across time, geography and regimes type, shows that the women's political empowerment makes the biggest difference in earlier time periods and in autocratic, and non-Western countries. One potential explanation for this

finding is that in non-democracies economic growth is generally slower due to the various restrictions in civil liberties and communications which trump growth. In this setting, enhanced women inclusion could be even more important to stimulate technological change and economic development. The results of the paper make a novel 'business case' for women's empowerment, adding to the normative reasons why women should be equally included in societal and political life. The empirical test is also pioneer in terms of interrogating such rich amount of data.

Paper number 2 considers the effects of having a woman chief executive on domestic health-care expenditure. In this paper I argue that the literature on representation and governance has overlooked the key role chief executives play in determining what priorities governments have, and in particular, when looking at budget composition. The paper examines 155 countries from 2000 to 2016, a period when there is a surge in the number of women national leaders. The analysis reveals a statistically significant association between having a woman head of state/head of government and subsequent change in health-care spending - a priority put forward both by women politicians and voters alike. This finding is statistically significant across different models, including when using matching methods. There is no significant association between the gender of the leader and three placebo outcomes: military expenditure (largely male priority), education (policy prioritized equally by both sexes) and health-care spending coming from external resources. Importantly, the correlation is present only when women assume positions of de-facto power, as opposed to ceremonial offices such as vice-presidents. In terms of scope conditions, the paper is very cautious in drawing any definite conclusions, as interaction models and split sample analysis is quite demanding in terms of required degrees of freedom, which is already limited by the small variation in the independent variable. There is some preliminary evidence that the effects are larger for both men and women national leaders as more women enter parliament, and for women leaders coming from left parties. However, more research is needed to interrogate these results further. The paper demonstrates that more emphasis on understanding the descriptive-substantive representation at this highest level of politics is needed, and makes a promising step in that direction.

Paper number 3, published in *European Political Science Review* and co-authored with Ruth Carlitz, focuses on sub-Saharan Africa, using data

from 1958 to 2015. The paper is a first of this kind in the region, which is home to the largest increase of women representation in recent years but where stark gender inequalities remain; thus, we argue our hypothesis should be particularly strong in this environment. We find a very stable association between the share of women in parliament and reduced infant and child deaths; a finding robust to including other important covariates driving the election of women and reduced mortality rates such as level of economic development, democracy, corruption, and international aid. The model specification also does not seem to change the main results - we test different lag structures from 1 to 5 year lags, year- and country-fixed effects, and both OLS and System-GMM estimators. One potential alternative explanation to our theory that women parliamentarians make a difference in reducing child mortality rates is the theory that a 'zeitgeist' driving positive changes across all domains related to women's standing in society, including the dependent and the independent variable. To address that endogeneity concern, we show that in the sample we analyze, the introduction of quotas alone and the share of women in cabinet are not associated with improved mortality rates in their own right. Further, the paper shows evidence that one pathway through which women MPs act to achieve women policy priorities is through resource mobilization, namely through higher budgets for health-care. We also use placebo outcomes to rule out the hypothesis that 'all good things go together', using electrification as proxy for infrastructure and spending for the military, both of which are seen as male priorities. Finally, the paper demonstrates that the positive change in the descriptive-substantive representation link does not happen absent certain societal and institutional efforts. Namely, active civil society, electoral quotas for women and proportional electoral systems are all conditions to establish a positive association between inclusion of women in politics and the development outcomes examined in the paper. However, the significant relationship holds also in autocracies. This finding could be partially explained with the successful interaction of women parliamentarians and women civil society organization to advance policies benefiting women also in authoritarian countries, as shown also in other papers in the dissertation.

The fourth paper (under review), co-authored with Sirianne Dahlum and Constanza Petrarca, focuses on corruption as a stumbling block to seeing the effects of political representation of women. To test the theory we use data

from 182 countries and the time series stretches from 1900 to 2014. We find support for the proposition that the effect of women's empowerment on infant mortality rates is conditioned on corruption levels. The paper discusses that only after reaching quite low level of corruption, around .6 on a 0 to 1 measure, there is statistically significant *negative* effect of empowerment on reducing infant mortality. To understand better the results, the score of Bulgaria in the 2000s and South Africa in 1995 is around .6. Further, the effect of empowerment when corruption is rampant is *positive.* This finding suggests that under conditions of low quality governance, inclusion of women might not serve to improve representation of group interests. Instead, increasing the numerical presence of women might be used as a facade by the ruling elite to channel narrow clientelistic interests that are harmful for development. We find that these harmful effects could be partially driven by institutional efforts to increase descriptive representation such as introducing quotas. Turning to the effects of corruption, our analysis shows that reducing instances of corruption is a statistically significant predictor of improved infant mortality rates; however, this effect is present only when men do not hold near-monopoly of political power. The results are stable to different model specifications, lags structures, the inclusion of country- and year-fixed effects, when using 5-year panels, and when accounting for important covariates. Taken together, the results from this paper suggest that making a concentrated effort to increase women's presence in politics could have positive impact on important development outcomes such as population's health but it matters the extent to which corruption is pervasive, potentially influencing the way representatives are recruited.

The final paper of the dissertation, published in *Electoral Studies* and co-authored with Steven Wilson, considers how women candidates for political office present themselves in election, tapping into the question of what 'women's issues' stand for. We analyze all tweets by candidates for national office - congress and gubernatorial positions, in the 2018 mid-term elections in the U.S. This part of the dissertation shows that even in most recent times women are those who put forward issues that have been traditionally considered as women's such as social and family issues, health-care, education, LGBT rights, and sexual assault. Our models estimate that being a woman candidate increased the expected proportion of mentions of female topics from 15% to 23% - a statistically significant difference which is retained

when we account for important covariates such as political ideology, age of the candidate, incumbency and previous experience. By contrast, women candidates talked less about the traditionally male issues like the economy, national security or immigration - topics that were more widely covered by male candidates. How did this pattern correlate with the likelihood of being elected? The paper discusses that women championing women's issues could be a successful electoral strategy (Herrnson et al. 2003) as women could own important topics such as health-care or sexual assault (a topic that was particularly relevant in the wake of the MeToo movement and the Kavanugh hearing). However, a focus on these issues could re-enforce negative stereotypes that women politicians are unable to engage with larger societal issues (Diekman et al. 2002). Importantly, we do not find evidence that women are punished electorally for focusing on women group interest. Instead, higher coverage of female topics is associated with higher likelihood of being elected. These findings have important implications due to the unequal representation of women in politics, and the fact that women issues tend to be significantly less discussed in political campaigns (Evans and Clark 2016). Our results suggest that women use social media to steer the conversation, present themselves as nuanced candidates, and talk about women group interests. Yet, we show that female candidates for office face disproportionately more hate messages on Twitter, in particular when they defy with gender stereotypes. This finding goes in line with previous research on violence in politics women face (Krook 2017)[14] The research design and focus of this paper is somewhat different than the other four in the dissertation, thereby contributing to illustrating a methodological and empirical breadth of the thesis. The manuscript makes an important contribution to the overall research question in the following ways, by: 1) discussing in detail

[14]This paper also considers another double-standard women candidates for political office face, which potentially serves as a barrier to being elected. We analyze the stereotype that leaders ought to be efficient and aggressive, features that tend to be associated with masculinity, while women are perceived to be kind and warm (Alexander and Andersen 1993, see e.g.). We do not find a significant difference in terms of aggressive messages on Twitter between men and women candidates.

the theoretical arguments about what 'women's issues' stand for, 2) summarizing the latest research on the topic, and 3) showing concrete evidence that women representatives indeed put more emphasis on issues related to health-care - a key dependent variable in the dissertation.

5 Concluding discussion

Building on a growing literature of gender and politics, this dissertation adds evidence about the transformative effects women have as they enter politics. This final section of the introductory chapters highlights some of the conclusions drawn from the different articles, and considers which points are valid also for other historically marginalized groups.

Although women are the largest politically sidelined group (Alexander and Jalalzai 2020), the marginalization of women, ethnic minorities and LGBT communities is similar in nature (Reynolds 2013). The same discriminatory laws and stereotypes that created and maintained a structure of distinct spheres for men and women (public vs private), are in the root of racial segregation, as well as exclusion based on sexuality (Hawkesworth 2003). The calls for inclusion of each of these groups stem from the same history of previous exclusion (Young 2002). Representation could thus be important to tackle history of mistrust and oppression of groups, no matter what characteristics define these groups (Mansbridge 1999).

The steps to achieve substantive representation could also be similar. Politicians across gender, race and sexuality can be legislative entrepreneurs representing the interests of those they stand for. They can set the agendas, advocate and build alliances for the issues important for them. The dissertation provides evidence that women politicians indeed stand for women issues through their actions. The literature finds support that the representation of other politically marginalized groups also translates to improved standing in general. For example, Reynolds (2013) finds that having openly gay legislators in office is followed by adopting improved rights for those groups. The mechanism is "familiarity through presence", where LGBT legislators have a transformative effect on the view and behavior of their colleagues but

also on acceptance of gay people in the population writ large.[15] As argued by Simien (2015) historic firsts are especially meaningful. Inclusion of previously marginalized groups are also symbols of social progress that reinforce new norms of behavior (Reynolds 2013), breaking stereotypes that politics should be dominated only by one group (straight, white males). Thus, representation has the opportunity to reduce sexism, racism, and homophobia among politicians, the public and legitimize these institutions in the eyes of those being represented (Mansbridge 1999).

Similarly in support of the ethnic descriptive-substantive representation, Preuhs (2007) finds that the presence of Latino representatives in U.S. legislative institutions is associated with increased welfare provisions for this group. This happens primarily by alleviating the negative effects of the increased Latino population and the associated racial resentment on part of the majority, that comes with that increase. Also in the U.S., Owens (2005) finds that increasing black representation in legislatures on state level is associated with changes in the budget composition with greater spending for welfare issues such as health-care and education, issues prioritized by black voters. Similarly, even when accounting for the share of black population and ruling political party is considered, Grose (2005) finds that black representation in the legislature predicts roll-call voting in the interest of African Americans.

The dissertation enriches our understanding about the societal conditions under which descriptive representation translates to substantive representation. The policy implications are positive: institutional efforts such as quota seats in the legislature and reforms of the electoral system can help for the meaningful representation of women. Arguably, other minorities will benefit from these reforms too. Htun (2004) suggests after being elected the group identity of women weakens, while that of ethnic minorities is sought to be reinforced, and ethnic groups are more likely to vote as a bloc (although that is not universal). Thus, the positive effects on substantive representation found in the case of women, could potentially be even stronger across

[15] See also the work by Haider-Markel 2007; 2010.

ethnic groups. However, important to note is that many of the studies on ethnicity considered here come from the U.S. and variations could be big when we consider other countries. Another important caveat is that just like gender, ethnicity does not define a homogenous group. Yet, the point stands that shared identity in the legislature could help to advance interests of the group as a whole, even if that is not guaranteed.

LGBTs are dispersed group like women in terms of other background characteristics, but there are no political quotas for LGBT representatives in any country so far. Given the low number of LGBT people, perhaps the most relevant point that could be taken from my research is building coalitions with other representatives, across institutions and with civil society. The dissertation suggests that achieving concrete results towards addressing women's interests is possible not only on elite level, but women citizens through their private lives and civil society activity also have power to change the status quo. Minority group mobilization thus could also be transformative.

However, the dissertation also warns that misogynistic culture and corrupt political networks can make the efforts to increase substantive representation of women futile. Policy-makers interested in the matter should be concerned with the extent to which old patterns are replicated in terms of following traditional values and being led by patrons not committed to change and inclusion. Similar to the findings from the gender and politics literature (Htun et al. 2013; Franceschet and Piscopo 2008), there is evidence that while minority groups as individuals are more likely to stand for the interests of the groups they represent, they face difficulties in successfully advancing those interests. Thus, women of color could be admitted to elite institutions only as "tokens" to signal diversity, but are required to follow the agenda of the majority group (Hawkesworth 2003). Further, the intersection between gender and race leads to enhancing of stereotypes and exclusion (Hawkesworth 2003; Smooth 2002) as African American women face more discrimination than other women or male African Americans. The term intersectionality was coined to capture the particular interplay of social forces that women of color face (Crenshaw 1990). Future research could focus more directly on exploring issues with intersectionality, for example, how representatives reconcile the call to represent different politically sidelined groups, and under what conditions they are successful in that endeavor.

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